

REMARKS

Applicant wishes to thank the Examiner for the telephonic interview on December 9, 2003.

Claims 1, 11, 16, and 24 have been amended to clarify what Applicant regards as the invention. Amendments to claims 19 and 20 are to bring these claims into conformity with the language of their base claim(s). Amendments to claims 12-15, 21-23, and 25-28 are to correct typographical errors. New claims 31, 32, 35, and 39-46 are based at least on former claim 1, and new claims 29, 30, and 36-38 are based at least on former claim 16. Particularly, Applicant notes that, for purpose of clarity, some the alternatives recited in former claim 1 have been presented separately in independent claims 1, 35, 39 and 43, and that some of the alternatives recited in former claim 16 have been presented separately in independent claims 16 and 36. No new matter has been added.

I. CLAIM REJECTIONS UNDER 35 U.S.C. § 112, SECOND PARAGRAPH

Claims 1-15 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which Applicant regards as the invention. Claim 1 has been amended to remove any such alleged indefiniteness in these claims. As such, Applicant respectfully submits that the claim rejections under § 112 have been overcome.

II. CLAIM REJECTIONS UNDER U.S.C. § 102/103

Claims 1-3, 7, 8, 11, 12, 14, 16-18, 21, 24, 25, and 27 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,540,681 (Strul). Claims 1-5, 11, 12, 14, 16-21, 24, 25, and 27 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,772,659

(Becker). Based on the discussion with the Examiner, Applicant believes that the amendments to the claims has overcome the claim rejections based on Strul and Becker.


CONCLUSION

Based on the foregoing, all remaining claims are believed in condition for allowance. If, the Examiner has any questions or comments regarding this amendment, please contact the undersigned at the below-listed number.

Respectfully submitted,

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